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Terry Goddard Joins U.S. Supreme Court Brief on Behalf of Reporters

(Phoenix, Ariz. - May 25, 2005) Attorney General Terry Goddard is joining a friend-of-the-court brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in support of two journalists facing jail sentences for refusing to disclose confidential sources.

The case stems from a grand jury investigation into who revealed the identity of CIA official Valerie Plame two years ago. She was first named by Robert Novak in his syndicated newspaper column. Disclosing an undercover intelligence officer's name can be a federal crime.

During the investigation, Matthew Cooper, a Time magazine correspondent, and Judith Miller, a New York Times reporter, declined to testify about their sources before a grand jury and were held in contempt by a federal judge, who ordered them jailed for up to 18 months.

The brief signed by Goddard asserts that the public interest is better served when journalists can talk with sources confidentially in some situations.

"Confidential sources are vital to a free society and a well-informed public," Goddard said. "Such major stories as the Pentagon papers, Watergate, Enron and Abu Ghraib relied on them. Most states, including Arizona, have recognized the importance of confidentiality in news-gathering and have enacted shield laws that protect some sources from being named. But federal law regarding confidentiality is less clear, and the Supreme Court now has the opportunity to confirm that this protection extends to federal cases."

The brief will be filed later this week by a group of attorneys general representing at least 31 states. It asks the U.S. Supreme Court to take the case and reverse a ruling made by a federal appeals court.

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